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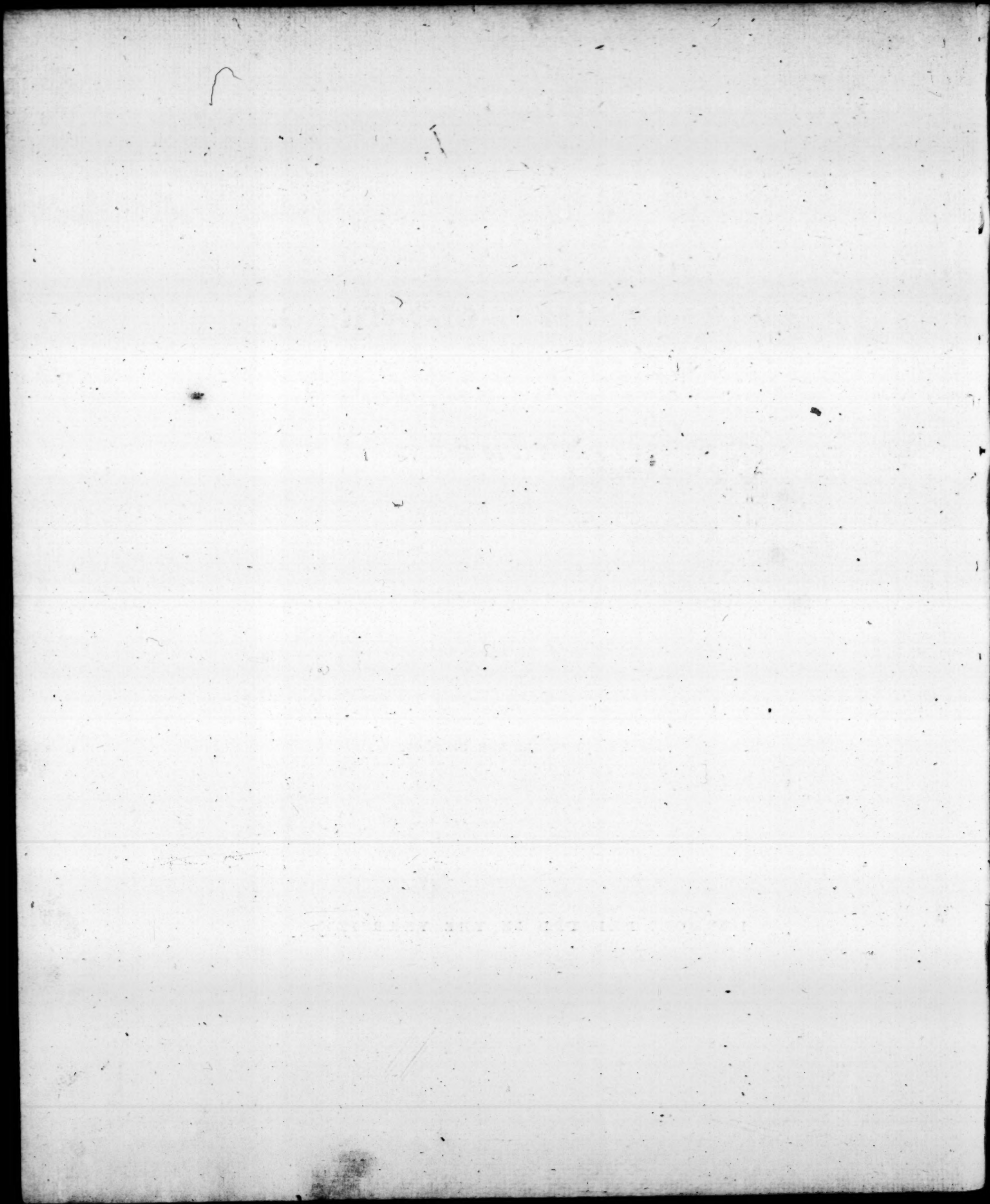
WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOATHING.

A F R A G M E N T.

ADDRESSED TO THE METHODISTICAL CLERGY, &c.

SIC, SIC JUVAT IRE SUB UMBRAS.

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9

THE

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOATHING.

A FRAGMENT.

NAY, strange to tell! the rankest Whitfieldite

That ever gulled a poor unlettered wight,

That ever prattled in preposterous strain

Or perched on tub or table roared amain,

Or

Or with high words repaired deficient deed
 Or cut the decalogue to lengthen out the Creed,
 (A lawless sect who spurn all honest worth,
 Call nonsense faith, old puritanic cant new birth,
 Who like fell ruffians act the Christian part
 And learn all rules of piety by ART
 Who serve with mouth-humility their God
 But lay about them with his staff and rod,
 Blacken both friends and foes, both far and near,
 That they may more angelic-white appear,
 Who often to despair their flocks have driven
 And sent their souls the shortest way to Heaven)
 That from the GALLOWS had been scarce reprieved
 Is in the bosom of the Church received;
 Or to some curacy advanced for gold
 Scatters contagious errors through the fold.

Unable

Unable to resist his magic charms

Our spiritual Quixotes drop their arms

And stoop to copy what they should despise

The consecration of absurdities,

Caught by the glare of these illusive fires.

Oh! how unlike their evangelic Sires,

Whom neither chains nor dungeons could appal

Or quench their ardour at religion's call.

Forgetting both their character and cause

They meanly court this phantom of applause;

To maxims vile and reasonings sophistic

They join the ROAR and RATTLE methodistic;

Nor care one straw what scandal they may give

Or how much sober Christians may grieve,

Or whether what they preach be right or wrong,

If they can only captivate the throng;

If

If some young Saint survey them through her fan
Or grizzled Dowager exclaim "Fine man!"

You'd think, in such high-mettled stile they dash on,
That reverence to God were out of fashion;
Bear themselves out with such conceited airs
As if they were at revels, routs, or fairs;
As if the Liturgy were public news
Or that it never were designed for use;
As if the end of prayer were to amuse ye
And all their preachings only to abuse ye;
As if invested with their sacred trust
Not to turn sinners but degrade the just;
Or that they proved their claim to holiness
Because one half their audience have less.

Of Heaven's insulted Majesty complain
Yet every moment take his name in vain.

Tell

Tell us HE only knows the heart of man,
Yet each minutest part presume to scan
Of those whom in their lives they never saw;
Well knowing should they find some latent flaw
(Like brethren of the last) to damn the soul,
They needs must be employed to make it whole.
Tell us to bend beneath his chastening rod
And become perfect as the Lamb of God,
Preserve the balance of affection even
And to forgive, as we would be forgiven.
Yet somewhat roughly treat their enemies
And call them Papists! Heathens! Pharisees!
Then to the flames, this verbal process done,
They send them packing every mother's son,
Without one virtue to redeem the soul;
These trading Saints monopolize the whole.

Or

Or when affailed by some tremendous loss
 When fearful AFTERCLAPS their wishes cross,
 We hear these modern Patriarchs roar and bawl
 Worse than the darkest Heathen of them all.
 Or when some rich Incumbent waxes old
 Whose simoniac scruples yield to gold
 Dispatch all points of conscience in a trice ;
 Nor even when ordained are over nice,
 Although they prove their doctrine orthodox
 By more than " apostolic blows and knocks,"
 Yet leave their reverend fathers in the lurch
 And make a CATSPAWE of the Mother Church.
 Nay, still more strange ! forsake their simple mode,
 Pass by " the straight gate and the narrow road "
 To flash and flounder in the mire of sin
 And with a whole day's rant take some poor clodpole in.

Even

Even so recruiting Serjeants when they list
 To seal the contract close their neighbour's fist;
 Or drink with raw-boned looby for a crown
 And make the man and money both their own.

Decked with odd scraps of sanctity judaic
 They make a ministry of pure mosaic,
 All which when moulded in the FORM of sense
 Provide them with a make-shift of defence;
 On which like Mambrin's helm they place reliance
 And set all truth and reason at defiance;
 With which like floating batt'ries shift their ground,
 Extend with scientific art around
 And metamorphose into every shape,
 That they may find a loop-hole to escape;
 And as all Romish errors we disown
 Erect an absolution of their own.

B

Faith

Faith, and good works, they place upon a level
And hold it orthodox to cheat the Devil.
For since both ways conduct alike to Heaven
They choose the most mellifluent, smooth and even.
In this both Saint and Sinner are agreed,
The only difference is in the Creed.
What one presumes not even to defend
The other reconciles from end to end;
And founds an ALTAR to the Deity
Upon the dregs of his iniquity.

Speak but the truth they call it an ATTACK
And feel the scourge already on their back.
Term such men Infidels! infernal elves!
And those FREE-THINKERS who judge for themselves.
Believe too little, they look wonderous sad;
Believe too much, they cry out we are mad;

Even

Even to believe at all, think somewhat odd,
And call those ATHEISTS who believe a God!

Of Jewish arts composed and Jewish lore
Up starts a race of men unknown before.
Each paltry vice and each ignoble view
With apostolic ardor they pursue;
And lay vast store of reputation in
More safely to indulge some favourite sin.
Confound the inward with the outward man;
To veil their own, each neighbour's faults they scan;
Lift up their lamb-like eyes and talk of grace
As if the one thing needful was grimace;
Calm and unmoved approach the throne of Heaven
As if they need but ASK to be forgiven;
As if the best repentance of a crime
Were to commit the more another time;

So

So if they strike off fifty from the score
 They soon take care to add a hundred more,
 And as their Lord is full of lenity
 Think they may cheat him with impunity.

Church is to them a soporific dose
 A charm that lulls their conscience to repose.
 With secret pride that GORDIAN knot they loose
 Which if untied might intercept their views,
 Walk o'er the course with such an easy air—
 What even credulity might doubt, they swear;
 And far above all moral scruples rise
 Their sophistry has taught them to despise;
 And as the INSIDE we can never know
 Unless developed by some OUTSIDE show,
 And if the outward man be free from sin
 We needs must think as much of him within,

They

They wisely practise all their sanctity
On the broad base of infincerity;
Enjoy both righteous and unrighteous mammon
And though they lose the game secure the GAMMON.
With counterfeited ashes strew the ground
Which oft raked up in clouds enclose them round,
Where many a text of holy writ is seen
And sighs and groans and vacant forms between,
Like Homer's gods abstract them from our view
At once divert our eyes and blind them too;
Thus armed, they make assurance double sure
And reign by their own stratagems secure.

Even so we see some sharpers of renown
Beguile with courteous air a country lown,
Kick up a dust or fright him with a rocket
To slip their hands more slyly in his pocket;

With

With scientific skill secure his treasure

Cry out "Stop thief!" and walk off at their leisure.

When feeble age which never comes too late

Or some more certain harbinger of fate

Around the bed of sickness takes his stand

Benumbs the sense, or shakes the withered hand,

When PIOUS heirs squeeze out perhaps a tear

And crows and undertakers hover near,

Nor Esculapean ARTS afford relief

These spiritual Quacks prescribe BELIEF.

When to the quick some bleating lamb is shorn

Or plunged in hopeless bondage pines forlorn;

When in PACIFIC trance some wretch is laid

And nature calls oblivion to her aid,

When o'er the frame their soothing power they spread

And scatter poppies o'er his languid head,

With

With lenient hand prepare him for his doom
And kindly SLOPE his passage to the tomb,
When prayers nor preachings can no more avail,
With many a garbled text and frightful tale
These croaking comforters infect his ear
And teach him, what he scarcely knew, to FEAR.
That rest, which even brutality might spare,
They rudely break by their officious care;
With erring zeal arrest his parting breath
And spread new horrors o'er the vale of death;
Dispel the mist which Heaven in mercy sent
And bid him, whether right or wrong, REPENT;
In all the bitterness of soul bemoan
A life, perhaps, far better than their own.
See from his cheek the lingering roses fly!
Up starts his hair! and wildly fixed his eye!

Avenging

Avenging furies ring his funeral knell
And push him headlong down the gulf of Hell,
Who had in native ignorance been blest
And sunk like flumbering infancy to rest.

What, in our weakness do they place their force?
And in our troubled hours their last resource?
Or must we to believe be sick or maimed?
Must reason like a hampered lion tamed
Ignobly crouch at superstition's call,
When fears infest the soul or flames appal?
Are good men then selected for the rod
And only knaves acceptable to God?
Is then our very being but a snare,
Our sober judgement, a delusive glare,
Conscience, of peace and rest the boasted seat,
Of unimagined crimes the soul retreat?

Or

Or must we to regenerate the soul
 Subject its faculties to their control?
 From the strong holds of sense and feeling driven
 And play the fool on earth to rise to Heaven?
 Must we then learn, who place our refuge there,
 The terrors of a WRETCH CONDEMNED to share?
 Renounce our comforts, as our pains increase
 And writhe in anguish, to depart in peace?
 With frantic fears and ceaseless doubts be torn
 That wake the nerve where agonies are born—
 What is religion, what is happiness,
 If such fallacious arts have power to bless?
 Ye truly pious, say! was it designed
 At once to charm and elevate the mind?
 That we might hold perfection still in view
 And still with unabated zeal pursue?

Each night the actions of the day to scan,
 ABOVE the hero to exalt the man?
 Our duties with our interests to combine
 And round the heart indissolubly twine?
 To succour our desponding virtue sent,
 That good men may stand firm, the bad repent,
 Even from the very DREGS of guilt arise
 And claim the bright reversion of the skies?
 Or is its object only to extort
 From our INFIRMITIES a frail support?
 To loose the POWERFUL and the WEAK to bind
 And in Cimmirean darkness plunge mankind?
 Say, was it thus, that Heaven's incarnate Lord
 Displayed the force of his omnific word
 When erst upon the Gallilean shore
 He bad the Adultress go, and sin no more?

To

To Jews and Gentiles spake the words of peace
And made at once their doubts and sorrows cease;
Pitied their errors and their wants relieved
And blessed even those who never had believed.
By his EXAMPLE taught us to forgive.
Taught us that sinners might repent and live.
In all his teachings, studied to impart
The virtues of a meek and contrite heart.
Would he instruct—the doctrine was designed
Against mere FORMS of faith to guard the mind,
But chiefly to detect the SPECIOUS LIE,
AND DEVIOUS WINDINGS OF HYPOCRISY.
Would he convert—it was in DEEDS express
And in each act the Godhead shone confess.
Even those who groaned on life's afflicted stage
Opprest by sickness, or worn out by age,

His

His powerful mandate soon revoked their doom
And broke the eternal flumbers of the tomb.
Surrounded with temptations, firm he stood,
And practised what he preached, and sealed it with his blood.

Far other scenes attract OUR wondering eyes
As MORALS sink, we see PRETENSIONS rise.
The SOCIAL virtues which adorned HIS plan
Which humanize and dignify the man
Fast bound at length in jesuitic lore
With force Herculean, prop the Dome no more.
Even as a plant torn from its native soil
Whose drooping blossoms mock the gardener's toil;
Or some high festival or splendid board
Where misers oft display their frugal hoard,
Where all inspires us with supreme delight
Becomes at length disgusting to the sight;

The

The GOSPEL once illumined wisdom's page
And spread conviction o'er the darkened age
When deeply rooted in the hearts of men;
Some unavailing forms indeed remain
Prayers, rites, and creeds, in wild confusion tost,
But all its FORCE and ENERGY are lost,
And of its MORAL influence bereft
Throned in scholastic mummery is left.

Like a dismasted wreck on foreign shore
Which stands unmoved amid the ocean's roar,
Which though abandoned by the frightened crew
Is still the refuge of some faithful few,
Of some who tremble at the boisterous wind,
Of some too for the good things left behind,
Or purchased by the PREDATORY band
Is towed at length upon the desert strand,

New

New rigged and patched, a heterogeneous mass,
 With keel of copper, and with front of brass,
 She braves the perils of the deep again
 On some vile project of unhallowed gain,
 FOUNDERED this ark of our salvation lies
 Upon the rock of incredulities;
 While some remain still pregnant of their cause,
 Others seduced by popular applause
 Or filthy lucre, serve the living God
 Or from the dread of his avenging rod;
 Repaired at length by Methodist Saint,
 Decked with odd signs of faith and riddles quaint,
 Well stored with arts to cozen and delude,
 The true Satanic falmagundi, strewed
 With remnants of DISCARDED virtues round,
 Upon a cruize of infamy is bound.

These /

These WRETCHED APES of Christianity,
These PATCHES of deceit and vanity,
Tell us that doing good is all a hum;
Denounce the terrors of the wrath to come
Not against finners but the pure in heart;
Not against those who act the treacherous part
Evade all laws, profess but to deceive,
But those who practise all, in few believe.
THESE are the scribes whose prostituted pen
Has shut up Heaven against the sons of men,
The race of vipers whose infernal din
Has hindered those who would have entered in.
But of the various lessons we receive
Not one THEY practise less than to forgive,
Though for their neighbours they affect to pray;
Yet oft amid this ludicrous display

Of

Of Christian meekness, the most deadly hate
 Pervades their bosoms; though their ALTERED state
 With sublunary treasures richly dight
 Long since has ceased our PITY to excite,
 Though persecutors now no more annoy
 And leave them nought but blessings to enjoy.

Of true repentance they are somewhat shy
 And more upon their INWARD LIGHTS rely,
 As such cant phrases serve their turn as well
 And like a magic wand or secret spell
 Each bugbear of the mind can raise or quell;
 For converts best are made with sorry tools,
 And knaves have oft become egregious fools
 And fools converted most consummate knaves;
 As one who in putrescent fountain laves

Becomes

Becomes a greater nuisance than before
And adds fresh odours to his native store.

When disappointments check their pious rage

(As SINNERS are in this degenerate age

Somewhat too deep for methodistic line)

They take some Tony of the ninety-nine;

Who being well with fire and brimstone scared

And by peculiar gifts for Heaven prepared,

(Words at command without one grain of sense,

Some hundred weight of sterling impudence,

With quantum sufficit of pride and phlegm)

Is twofold more the child of Hell than them.

Would THEY instruct, detraction leads the way,

As the proud Pharisee was used to pray

They preach: "The Saint is Heaven's peculiar care

"And (Saints excepted) not as others are

D

"Canter,

" Canters, deceivers, hypocrites, fly dogs,
" Worse than the blight-wind or the plague of frogs,
" Contaminated with each mortal sin"—

Then the poor humble Publican chimes in.

(The world is now the phrase.) They tread the stars

And wage with Heretics eternal wars,

Attacked by them too on the self-same ground

All parties hurl anathemas around;

In adamant chains each other bind

And, damned themselves, would damn all human kind.

Would THEY convert, since miracles have ceased

The terms of our admission are increased;

The price is INDISCRIMINATE BELIEF.

In PRACTICE they afford us some relief

But all their THEORIES with zeal defend—

Begin the work just where they ought to end.

And

And though like Clotworthy of old and Maynard
 To prove the honest man a rogue they strain hard,
 Yet on their FRIENDS are seldom seen to lour
 Provided they the camel will devour;
 And bid them soar to make the matter even
 On pinions of iniquity to Heaven.

But as appearances attract the fight
 A thousand virtues shine with borrowed light,
 Fly from the bosom erst their dwelling place,
 Flirt on the flippant tongue, and blazon in the face.
 While those who to authority refuse
 More than was erst exacted of the Jews
 Or than the evidence of sense could claim
 Are plunged at once in everlasting flame.
 As if we could control our faith at ease
 Or like a time-piece set it how we please.

But

But that they are **EXAMPLES** none deny.
In all **GOOD** things they are exemplary.
Good bands and furpluffles, good hats and wigs,
Geese, fowl, ducks, turkeys, pigeons, roasting pigs,
The **BEST** examples of each sort and size,
Good house, good wine, good puddings and good pies.
As virtue from the Sanctuary driven
No longer purifies the soul for heaven,
But doomed with cooks and scullions to resort
Sparkles in burgundy, looks black in port,
Nay, even reduced to powder, pill, or drop,
Stands like a drab at alley, post, or shop,
Exposed on writs or hid beneath a flaw
Affociates with the harpies of the law.
If chance to **MORAL** good they make transition
'Tis only for a Sunday's exhibition.

But

But as examples of TRUE piety
The mimic powers of art but ill supply,
Though reinforced by methodistic guile,
Their lame performances excite a smile;
Although the tears stand trembling in their eyes
Or pour amain with intermingled sighs,
Although they speak what piety inspires
“Not from the soul nor faithful to its fires,”
Most dexterously play off their airs of grace
Too plainly we perceive—’tis all a face.

As when some village Roscius strains his throat,
To personate a character of note,
Of manners gentle and of thoughts refined,
A part for which he never was designed,
Not knowing how to ACT, he stamps and stares,
Affects a thousand wild theatric airs,

And

And ere one half his buskined race be run
 " Sees troops of furies and a double fun,"
 Nor formed by nature to sustain his part
 Finds out a wretched substitute in art.

Or to that Taylor, whose high-mettled jade
 Is oft in prints and theatres displayed,
 Who erst to Brentford rode with comic air
 The Muse may these preposterous Saints compare.
 The last of horsemen, even without a name,
 Yet all surpassing on the lists of fame;
 Who to their text and to his colours true
 Would fain conceal his faults from public view,
 Thrown from his seat still clings with all his force
 And in some frail expedient finds resource,
 To save himself lays hold on either end,
 But with this difference, that they never MEND.

Of

Of alms, 'tis said, they once were wonderous free;
 Nay, even of TYTHES had but one part in three;
 Another, for the fabric was decreed
 And the rest paid to those who most had need.
 The poor man then was merry as a grig
 And parish churches warm, and neat, and trig.
 These bold assertors of the rights of man
 Have fixed it now upon a better plan,
 Provided for themselves, were they to blame?
 And left the church and poor to do the same.
 That none might their peculiar loss bemoan
 Most charitably made it ALL their own.
 Nay, better still, where'er they find a flaw
 Coolly remonstrate—in a suit at law.
 The peasant's labours view with jealous care
 And of each pittance, deign to take their share;

Disdain

Disdain to play the catchpole or the dun;
 Even though improvements be as ten to one
 They modestly assume but one in ten
 To recompence the industry of men.
 Of all their augmentations keep a flock
 To help their needy brethren of the flock.

But best of all, to ease the burthened land
 Or that their plaints who groan beneath the hand
 Of base oppression may not reach their ears,
 Disturb their feelings or alarm their fears,
 They call a host of ruffians to their aid
 Who best their rights may guard or ours invade,
 To them depute at an enormous price
 The sanction of the law to tyrannize,
 To tax the poor and needy as they please,
 To plague, to grind, to worry, and to seize,

Yet,

Yet oh, surpassing energy of mind!

Oh, PIOUS fraud! oh, cruelty REFINED!

They still regard them with paternal care,

Whom avarice chastens, pity fain would spare;

Nay, even amid their sufferings doubly dear,

"Alas, poor devils!" they exclaim—and shed a tear.

NOW MARK WHAT FOLLOWS. This degenerate race
Of all religion are the foul disgrace.

That source of bliss, that gem above all price

Is now the cunning'st instrument of vice;

That glorious cause inhumanly betrayed

Even by those very men who most should aid;

Who think the credit of their sect will rise

The more the social virtues they despise.

What God himself has joined, their rites profane

And sacrilegious dogmas rend in twain;

For as we advance in this new-fangled PIETY

The

The farther we recede in true MORALITY.
 Mute are these tuneful harbingers of day
 Or grate the ear with a discordant lay
 Which joined in one accord so sweetly sing:
 Broke the prime feather of the eagle's wing:
 The arch whose summit would have reached the skies
 Now trembling o'er its base neglected lies;
 Reft of that BOND which can alone ensure
 No prop can save, no buttress can secure.
 Even the piled trophies of the sculptured wall
 Serve only to precipitate its fall.

The real Christian sickens at the sight
 Of this DEVOUT apostacy from right,
 This insult to his God; and sorely grieves
 To see his house once more "a den of thieves."
 Surveys the TOTTERING fabric with a sigh
 And smites his throbbing breast—and passes by—